

My name is Robin Wallbridge: I am 57 years old. I live, work, and connect with my community in Deming, VanZandt, Kendall, Acme and Bellingham WA. My home is on the North Fork of the Nooksack River in Deming. I am writing concerning the building of the new terminal at Cherry Point. I am concerned that our local health and environment will be negatively impacted by the severe increase in coal trains through Whatcom County including the Highway 9 corridor and Bellingham.

The increase in coal trains will create 3,360,000 pounds of dust per day lost between the mining, shipping, and unloading of coal. We live in a beautiful area, populated by many organic farmers along the Highway 9 Corridor. Putting coal dust into the air puts the organic farmers and organic food shoppers at risk of losing their jobs, health, and livelihood. The railroad tracks cross many parts of the Nooksack River and follow along Bellingham Bay. Our waterways will be contaminated, endangering our drinking water, recreation, and aquatic wildlife. Marine traffic will be enhanced, creating a loss in herring population, a vital factor in our wildlife cycle here in the northwest. Disasters are inevitable. Emergency response plans are notoriously futile. Think Valdez. These coal tankers are bigger than the oil tankers. Marine noise will also affect sea mammals to the point of confusion, putting them in danger.

Asthma rates will increase and in effect, so will our health care costs. Many doctors in Bellingham have endorsed the NO COAL movement. No one wants us to get sicker from the air than we already are. Asthma is already epidemic.

Noise pollution is another factor. In VanZandt we have our community hall and our local grocery, separated by the tracks by a matter of yards. At our hall we hold poetry readings, memorial services, celebrations, local market events, and an annual reading of the names of the children in our community who have passed away. These names are written in stone on large rocks at the Josh Vanderyacht Park, directly behind our community hall. It takes a long to read; as we read each name we pause and remember. This is an important time for all of us. The noise and dirt from continual coal transport will damage this community experience for us.

Another health matter is that of emergency vehicles, the coal trains delaying the route of an emergency vehicle, when time is of the essence. Many of my dearest friends live on Hillside road, in Van Zandt, of which there is one and only one route that crosses the railroad track.

I believe there should be no expansion of coal transport through Bellingham and the Highway 9 Corridor. Money should be used to research and create clean green energy and give us those jobs please! Faulty emergency response plans and highly litigated settlements cannot replace what we have here.

To see how truly damaging this project will be, please interview the local organic farmers, doctors who treat asthma, local fishermen and crabbers, marine scientists, park rangers, emergency vehicle operators, and local community members.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Robin Wallbridge

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